

Waving signs bearing slogans like “New Jobs, Green Jobs,” a group of local activists visited Rep. John Campbell’s district office in Newport Center on Wednesday to urge the congressman to support President-elect Barack Obama’s economic stimulus plan.

Campbell’s staff met the group with bottled water and a plate of chocolate doughnuts neatly arranged on an American-flag-patterned serving platter.

“He [Campbell] is for it — he supports it,” Lou Penrose, district director for Campbell, told a crowd of about 20 people at a noon rally outside Campbell’s office.

“But will he vote for it?” someone shouted from the crowd.

Campbell, who was in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, was selected earlier this week to help lead a hearing on Capitol Hill today to develop ideas to help stimulate the national economy.

The hearing is a response to Obama’s request for Republican input on the issue.

“Ideology has to be checked at the door,” Penrose told the group. “We’ve got to do what we can to get the economy rolling again — or we’re looking at a 15% unemployment rate.”

Organized by the political action committee Moveon.org, the Newport Beach rally was one of hundreds at congressional offices across the country Wednesday geared at generating bipartisan support for Obama’s stimulus package, which some have said could cost \$850 billion.

“This is supposed to be an affluent community, but there is so much going on. People are having problems making their car payments. Their houses are in foreclosure,” said Kate Frankel Nikolenko, a local organizer for Moveon.org.

Costa Mesa resident Steven Markell held up a sign at the rally that read "Green jobs, healthcare for all, clean energy."

"I have no health insurance and a wife and young son to support," Markell said.

Markell and others visited Campbell's district office to lobby for healthcare reforms as part of Obama's stimulus package.

A flesh-eating bacteria sent Markell to Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian two years ago and left him with \$400,000 in medical bills after eight surgeries.

He had to turn to a charitable organization to help pay off his medical expenses, he said. Markell also was recently laid off from working as an independent contractor with a large supermarket chain.

Now he hopes Obama's stimulus plan will give him and others affordable access to health care and job opportunities.

"Did they buy us off with doughnuts and bottled water? I don't know," said Orange resident Richard Snyder, who brought a cardboard sign reading "Got stimulus plan?" to the rally.

"We just want to see some sort of accountability," Snyder said.